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ABSTRACT

In July 2000, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) launched a partnership for the 2000-2001 school year with the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning to provide a framework for guiding leadership and classroom practices to ensure that all students in the district have the opportunity to reach the high standards of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) program. This report presents information for decision makers about the implementation of the Principles of Learning initiative during its first year and to make recommendations for program improvement as the Principles of Learning are more fully adopted in the AISD. Information about the implementation was gathered through surveys of 400 teachers, 107 principals, 80 instructional specialists, and 5 area superintendents on indicators about communication and participation. Professional development for educators at all levels in the district was a major part of the work involved in this program. Area superintendents also conducted campus visits known as Learning Walks, which gave campus staff more opportunities to learn about the principle of Clear Expectations, part of the program. Evaluation findings show that staff at all levels are learning about the initiative and beginning to implement the practices associated with Clear Expectations.Implementation is uneven across the district, but data show that it has begun. Recommendations for program improvement center on the need to include teachers in professional development activities, include more examples of the Principles, and provide a more global district perspective. (Contains 5 tables, 11 figures, and 4 references.) (SLD)

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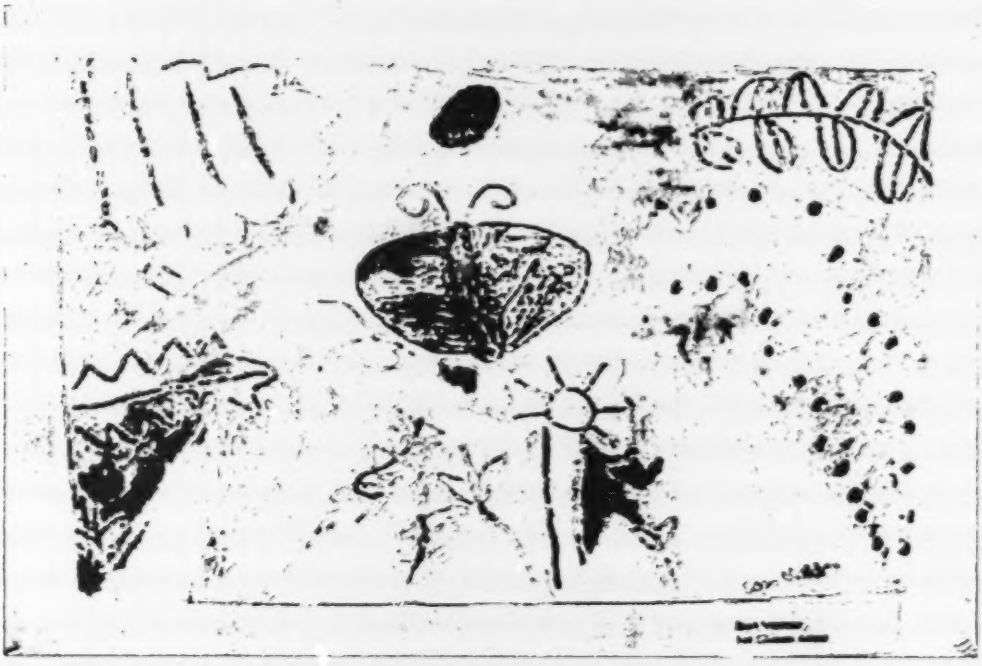
Principles of Learning

2000-2001 Report



Austin Independent School District

Office of Program Evaluation

June 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2000, the Austin Independent School District launched a partnership for the 2000-2001 school year with the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning, directed by Lauren Resnick. The primary goal of this partnership is to provide a framework for guiding leadership and classroom practices that ensure all students in the district have the opportunity to reach the high standards established by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The framework is built around teaching and learning and aims to address issues of equity in learning opportunities and student achievement, with attention to rigorous instructional standards structured around the TEKS.

Authored by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL), the Principles of Learning are a set of research-based guidelines for promoting classroom practices shown to promote academic rigor and high-quality learning by students, most notably in an environment that stresses effort, rather than aptitude, in the service of learning. During 2000-2001, staff from the Institute assisted with the development of training that would familiarize educators with the Principles of Learning and help them begin implementing classroom practices associated with the principle of Clear Expectations, all in the context of the TEKS standards.

The TEKS are integral to the Principles of Learning initiative and other work that the district is engaged in with the Institute. In 2003, a new state assessment for students will be implemented—the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)—that will be more closely aligned to the TEKS. Students receiving instruction aligned with the TEKS will be more likely to perform well on the new assessment according to the Texas Education Agency. The Principles of Learning, then, are meant to incorporate high-quality instructional practices in the context of the state's standards-based curriculum.

The initiative is also designed to strengthen instructional leadership among educators at all levels in the district. By recognizing educators at all levels as learners who constantly build their knowledge and skills, and by focusing attention on effective classroom instruction and the evaluation of student learning, the district can become more focused on improvements at the "technical core of education" (Elmore, 2000).

Major Activities

Professional development for educators at all levels in the district formed a major part of the work involved with the Principles of Learning initiative. The district superintendent, area superintendents, principals, assistant principals, curriculum and instructional specialists, and teachers all attended professional development sessions throughout the year about the principle of Clear Expectations and its implementation. While many of the sessions for area superintendents and principals were led in part by resident fellows of the IFL, area superintendents and principals played a significant role in leading their staff members' learning about Clear Expectations. Area superintendents also conducted campus visits known as LearningWalks, in which campus staff had additional opportunities to learn more about the principle of Clear Expectations and discuss issues about their own campus' implementation.

Evaluation Findings

Based on: 1) surveys of area superintendents, principals, instructional specialists, and teachers, and 2) observations of professional development meetings, LearningWalks, and examination of a sample of Campus Improvement Plans, it is clear that staff at all levels are learning about the initiative and beginning to implement the practices associated with Clear Expectations. The level of implementation is uneven across the district, and in many cases, uneven within campuses, but the data indicate that the implementation of the Principles of Learning has begun, and is on track toward a fuller integration throughout the district. More work on the part of educators at all levels remains crucial for success of the initiative, however, and the IFL is currently working to address the specific needs of educators in the four core content areas of mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science.

Recommendations

1. *Teachers should be included in professional development for the campus principals, as begun in Fall 2001.* While principals were busy learning about the initiative throughout the 2000-2001 school year, the inclusion of teachers may have made the initiative more effective in disseminating the philosophy and the practice of the Principles of Learning, and in facilitating the growth and development of learning communities on campuses. As it was in 2000-2001, the learning on any one campus

appeared to be dependent on the leadership on that campus and the understanding of the initiative by the principal.

2. *Include more examples of implementation of the Principles of Learning from the classroom in professional development sessions for principals and teachers.* Teachers and principals often suggested that examples of the use of Clear Expectations in the classroom, in connection with the TEKS, would improve professional development. A few teachers also suggested that having an AISD teacher present training on the Principles of Learning would be helpful.
3. *Professional development that involves teachers should include a more global district perspective on the new initiative and where possible, capitalize on teachers' expertise.* Some teachers who responded to an open-ended survey question about the Principles of Learning reported a perception of constantly changing initiatives in the district, some of which they felt stood in conflict with others. In addition, some teachers reported that their years of experience and previous training was not acknowledged when new programs were implemented. Program administrators might consider devoting time during professional development sessions to a short discussion that addresses the district's global perspective of the initiative and how it fits with other initiatives. Consistently acknowledging teachers' expertise for carrying out the initiative will also help staff develop a better understanding of the initiative and each individual's role in carrying it out.

PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to present information for decision makers about the implementation of the Principles of Learning initiative during its first year and to make recommendations for program improvement as the Principles of Learning are more fully adopted in AISD. The report covers major issues pertinent to the progress of the Principles of Learning implementation. Information about the implementation was gathered through surveys of teachers, principals, instructional specialists, and area superintendents on indicators such as the amount of communication about teaching and learning, topics covered during meetings, and the extent of teacher participation in LearningWalks. Additionally, a sample of Campus Improvement Plans was examined for indicators of plans to implement the Principles of Learning. Because the initiative extends throughout the district, other effects are covered, such as the structure and effectiveness of professional development, and perceived organizational changes in job duties among administrators in the district. Finally, the report includes recommendations for improving the implementation of the Principles of Learning and work within the partnership with the IFL. Avenues for improving the implementation focus mainly on ways to enhance professional development, since during this first year, professional development was a major part of the initiative.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation staff would like to acknowledge the assistance of a number of people who provided feedback and technical assistance on various portions of the evaluation of the Principles of Learning initiative during 2000-2001. AISD program leaders helped plan the evaluation and develop the surveys used to gather data from participants. Staff in the Division of Accountability and Information Systems provided support and constructive feedback for this evaluation. Staff from the Office of Communication Services provided technical support for making the teachers' survey available on the Web. Additionally, Resident Fellows of the IFL at the University of Pittsburgh offered assistance with the construction of surveys, as did a senior advisor for education policy at the RAND Corporation. Finally, AISD acknowledges the support of the RGK Foundation in the IFL-AISD partnership.

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OVERVIEW

After a preliminary planning time spanning January 2000 through June 2000, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) launched a full partnership in July 2000 with the Institute for Learning (IFL), directed by Lauren Resnick at the University of Pittsburgh. The primary goal of this partnership is to provide a framework for guiding leadership and classroom practices that ensure all students in the district have the opportunity to reach the high standards established by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The framework is built around teaching and learning and aims to address issues of equity in learning opportunities and student achievement, with attention to rigorous instructional standards, as structured around the TEKS.

The framework includes nine Principles of Learning that describe research-based practices shown to promote academic rigor and high-quality learning by students, most notably in an environment that stresses effort, rather than aptitude, in the service of learning, and with constant attention to the standards. The nine Principles of Learning are:

- Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum,
- Accountable Talk,
- Clear Expectations,
- Fair and Credible Evaluations,
- Learning as Apprenticeship,
- Organizing for Effort,
- Recognition of Accomplishment,
- Self-management of Learning, and
- Socializing Intelligence.

Another goal of the partnership is to strengthen instructional leadership within the district's entire staff of educators by generating thoughtful discussion about teaching and learning. The model used for describing this leadership and its related professional development is known as the *Nested Learning Community*. This term encompasses the IFL philosophy that: 1) recognizes educators at all levels as learners who constantly build their knowledge and skills and 2) focuses attention on effective classroom instruction that drives students toward achieving the standards and producing quality

work. Under the model of the Nested Learning Community, staff are teachers as well as learners in the context of professional development activities such as study groups and campus visits to campuses known as LearningWalks, as described later in this report. In this dual role as teacher and learner, educators are expected to ensure that students have an environment structured for high-quality learning.

An important practice associated with the implementation of the Principles of Learning is *LearningWalks*, which are focused visits to a school's classrooms. In AISD, these have been largely conducted by an area superintendent with the principal, but some areas and campuses have also organized LearningWalks for teachers. During classroom visits, LearningWalk participants observe teaching and learning through the lens of the Principles of Learning. Students are often approached by the group with questions about what they are learning and how they judge their own work according to standards. After the classroom visits, the LearningWalk group debriefs. Group members discuss their observations and address ways to ensure that the school's work on the Principles moves forward. LearningWalks in the AISD are non-evaluative; the goal is to discuss ways to: 1) further clarify expectations for students to encourage high quality work and 2) ensure that faculty and the principal are discussing teaching and learning at a thoughtful level. These observations are then carefully summarized in a letter to the teachers of that campus. Questions are also included in the letter; these are meant to provoke reflection on how to further build a school environment that fosters high standards and clear expectations for students.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Much of the work under the partnership thus far has included ongoing, comprehensive professional development for all AISD teachers and administrators, with guidance from the Resident Fellows of the IFL. The purpose of this professional development has been to provide introductions to, and coaching in, the Principles of Learning that will focus classroom practices so that students can achieve the standards established in the TEKS.

Implementation of the Principles in 2000-01 began with a focus on Clear Expectations and, to some extent, on Accountable Talk, two Principles of Learning that are described later in the body of the report as well as in Appendix A. Accountable Talk was originally planned to be a focus of the initiative in 2000-01, however professional

development did not address Accountable Talk nearly as much as Clear Expectations. Still, some campuses began implementing Accountable Talk during 2000-01. The Principles are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they overlap in how they address issues such as theories of learning, pedagogy, and equity in the classroom. Consequently, while implementation of the Principles in AISD began with Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk, discussions also occurred among administrators about Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, a third Principle of Learning.

Funding for the Initiative

The total allocation for funding the AISD-IFL partnership from July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001 was $365,000 (i.e., $4.74 per student, based on approximately 77,000 students in that school year). Funding for the initiative came from a variety of sources. AISD contributed $110,000 from its Coca-Cola staff development fund, and the RGK Foundation provided a grant of $125,000 to the Austin Public Education Fund to help fund the cost of AISD's partnership with the IFL. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Research and Improvement paid $70,000 to the IFL for AISD's participation in the IFL's pilot of technology-based professional development program known as NetLearn. Finally, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation contributed $60,000 to the IFL for AISD's participation in a think tank with other districts that had partnerships with the IFL (Rips, 2001).

Data Sources for the Evaluation

Table 1 on the following page shows the sources of data that were collected as part of the formative evaluation of the Principles of Learning initiative and includes information about data collection for each component. These sources will be referred to throughout the report. In addition, evaluators attended many of the professional development sessions, planning meetings, and selected LearningWalks. Therefore, other data sources for the initiative include Principles of Learning documentation, professional development materials produced by IFL and/or AISD, and notes from professional development meetings and LearningWalks.

Data in this report are organized by the three major questions that have guided the formative evaluation of this initiative:

- *What kinds of campus-level activities occurred with respect to implementation of the Principles of Learning?*
- *What were the perceived effects of the professional development and other work associated with the implementation of the Principles of Learning?*
- *How could the implementation of the Principles of Learning be improved?*

Table 1: Data Sources, Times of Data Collection, Response Rates, and Sample Sizes for Data Collected for the Evaluation of the Principles of Learning Initiative, 2000-2001

Data Source	Approximate Time of Data Collection	Response Rate	Sample Size
Area Superintendent Survey	May 2001	60%	5
Principal Survey	March 2001	84%	107
Instructional Specialist Survey	April 2001	41%	80
Teacher Survey	May 2001	31%	400
Employee Coordinated Survey	January 2001	Principals & Asst. Principals:~83% Teachers: ~85%	Principals & Asst. Principals:~50 Teachers:~150
Campus Improvement Plans	March 2001	80% of sample available for analysis	16

LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

Staff members' understanding of the Principles of Learning was assessed primarily through self-report. For example, surveys included items asking staff members whether the professional development provided under the initiative advanced understanding about teaching and learning and prepared them to assist in the implementation. Classroom observations were not a part of the evaluation design, because during this first year, the majority of AISD staff were just beginning to learn about the initiative and its implementation.

Another limitation of the report involved the low response rate on the teacher survey, which was probably due to the fact that the survey was administered in May.

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While teachers were generally positive about the initiative, some respondents reported dissatisfaction and even attached separate statements to express their concerns. Given the low response rate, it seems likely that the results reflect opinions of teachers who had especially strong feelings, either positive or negative, about the initiative, and therefore may not be generalizable to the larger population of AISD teachers.

CAMPUS-LEVEL ACTIVITIES THAT OCCURRED WITH RESPECT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

THE BEGINNING OF THE INITIATIVE

As a baseline measure of how campuses embraced the implementation of the Principles of Learning at the start of 2000-2001, a sample of Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) was examined for references to work involving the Principles of Learning. Twenty campuses were randomly selected for this review of Campus Improvement Plans: four high schools, seven middle/ junior high schools, and nine elementary schools. Of the selected campuses, four did not have CIPs that were available; these four campuses were still working on them. Additionally, many of the other CIPs that were received were still in draft form. Nevertheless, of the 16 remaining campuses that did have CIPs, 12 referred to implementing the Principles of Learning. References to implementation of the Principles varied, indicating that principals started the year with varying degrees of understanding about the initiative. Principals were aware of the initiative and sought to include it in plans for professional development and/or improving student performance in content areas.

For various reasons, staff learned about the Principles of Learning at different points in the year—some as early as spring of 2000, and others late in the summer. When the district partnership with IFL was under discussion in spring of 2000, a few campuses had the benefit of visits by IFL staff. During those visits, some of which included LearningWalks, the campuses received a brief introduction to the Principles of Learning. Another reason for differences in references to the Principles of Learning is that a number of principals were new to their campuses in Fall 2000, when CIPs were written that year.

To better understand when the work of implementing the Principles began, Principals and instructional specialists were asked the following question on a survey: "When did work (for example, professional development or LearningWalks) on the Principle of Clear Expectations begin at your campus?" Response options included each month from February 2000 to January 2001, except for June, July, and August 2000, which were subsumed by the response option, "Summer 2000." The largest percentage of principals, 24% (21 out of 88 who answered this question) indicated that work on the Principle of Clear Expectations began at their campuses in Summer 2000. In the second most-cited response, 21% (18 principals) indicated that the implementation began in

April 2000. A majority of principals, in fact, 72%, indicated the implementation began during Summer 2000 or *before*.

Among the 33 instructional specialists who responded to this question, the largest percentage, 27% (n=9) indicated that work on implementing Clear Expectations began in September 2000. The cumulative data show that a majority of instructional specialists, 55%, (n=18) reported that work on Clear Expectations began in Summer 2000 or before. Eighty-two percent of the respondents indicated that implementation began in September 2000 or before.

Classroom teachers were asked a similar question to determine when students first encountered implementation of the Principles: "When did you begin implementing the Principle of Clear Expectations in your classroom?" Response options included each month from September 2000 through March 2001, plus the option, "Have not yet started." Of the 123 teachers who responded to the survey, the largest percentage, 47% (n=58) indicated that implementation of Clear Expectations in the classroom began in September 2000. Responses further show that a majority of teachers in this sample, 76% (n=93) had begun implementing Clear Expectations in their classrooms by October 2000. All teachers indicated that they had started implementing the principle by the time the survey was administered (i.e., May 2001).

STAFF DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

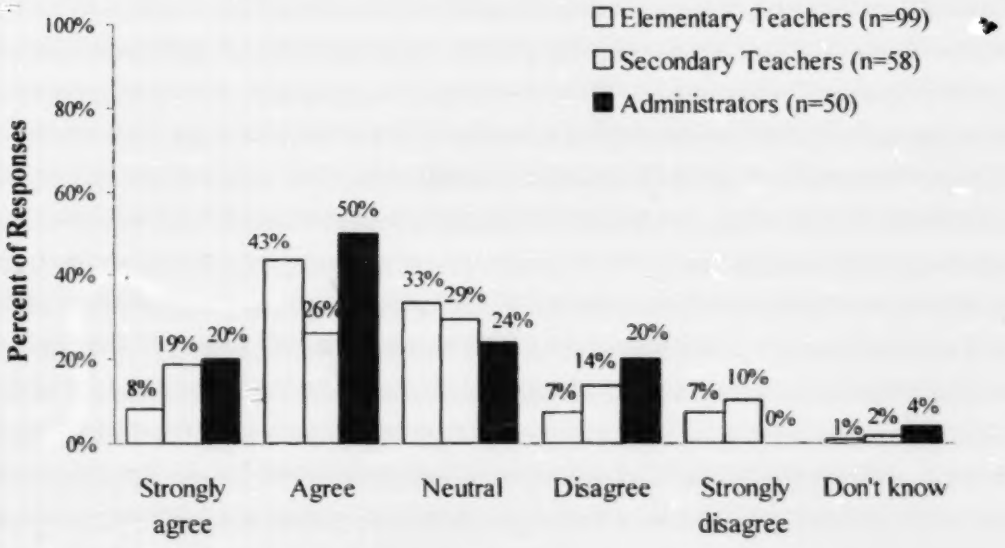
Campus staff had several avenues for learning about the Principles of Learning. In accordance with the Nested Learning Communities model, principals were expected to lead or coordinate learning opportunities for campus staff. Assistant principals and instructional specialists, the latter from Title I campuses, participated in a series of district-wide professional development seminars targeted to their respective roles so that they could assist in the implementation of Clear Expectations at their campuses. Results of a Coordinated Survey item directed at a randomly selected sample of campus administrators showed that of 48 who responded, 81% indicated that they "organized a workshop(s) or meeting(s) in which faculty were engaged in formulating a criteria chart and/or rubric." Another 10% reported having "organized a meeting(s) for faculty in which Clear Expectations were discussed, but participants did not engage in activities such as formulating a criteria chart or rubric." Recall that the Coordinated Survey was administered in January of 2001. Finally, a combined 8% (n=4) of the administrators

who responded to this question indicated that "My staff is just getting ready to study Clear Expectations," or "I need to learn more about Clear Expectations before I am ready to share this with my faculty."

To further understand the conversations occurring among principals about teaching and learning, principals were also asked about the most common focus of discussion during horizontal (i.e. campus level) meetings. The three most frequent topics of discussion reported were, in decreasing order: Clear Expectations, curriculum and instruction, along with Clear Expectations, and matters related to operations. These responses mirror the topics reported most often by principals at their Area Meetings, in decreasing order: Clear Expectations, curriculum and instruction, along with Clear Expectations, and the TEKS. The primary difference in topics discussed in Area meetings was the reported frequency of topics related to operations (i.e., school management issues). Operations was cited the least number of times by principals as a focus of Area meetings, suggesting that area superintendents were engaged in focusing on instruction when leading their Area meetings.

On the 2001 district employees' Coordinated Survey, a sample of 50 campus administrators and 157 teachers (99 elementary and 58 secondary) responded to a question in which they were asked to rate their agreement with a statement about how the work on Clear Expectations had impacted relationships among teachers and the principals at their campus. Figure 1 on the following page shows that administrators were more likely to strongly agree or agree (70%; n=35) that the work on Clear Expectations had positively impacted relationships, compared with elementary teachers (51%; n=77) and secondary teachers (45%; n=26). Secondary teachers were more likely to indicate that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (24%; n=14), compared with the other groups.

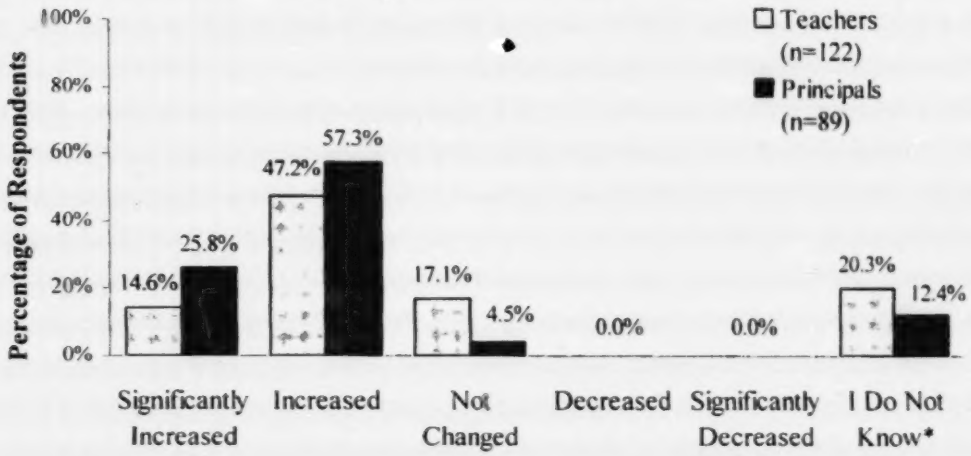
Figure 1: Administrators' and Teachers' Responses to the Item: *"Work on the Principle of Learning, Clear Expectations, has positively impacted relationships among teachers and the principals at my campus."*



COMMUNICATION ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

In light of the initiative's aim to engage educators in discussions about instructional practice under the Nested Learning Community model, principals and teachers were asked several questions pertaining to their communication about teaching and learning in 2000-2001 on the principals' and teachers' surveys. Eighty-nine principals and 122 teachers responded to questions about their perception of the number of discussions about teaching and learning compared to the previous year, as a result of the focus on Clear Expectations. Figure 2 shows that the greatest percentages of both groups responded that such discussions had "increased" or "significantly increased." None of the principals or teachers indicated that such discussions had decreased. Twenty percent of the teachers and 12% of principals, however, reported that they did not know, because they were not at the campus during the previous academic year.

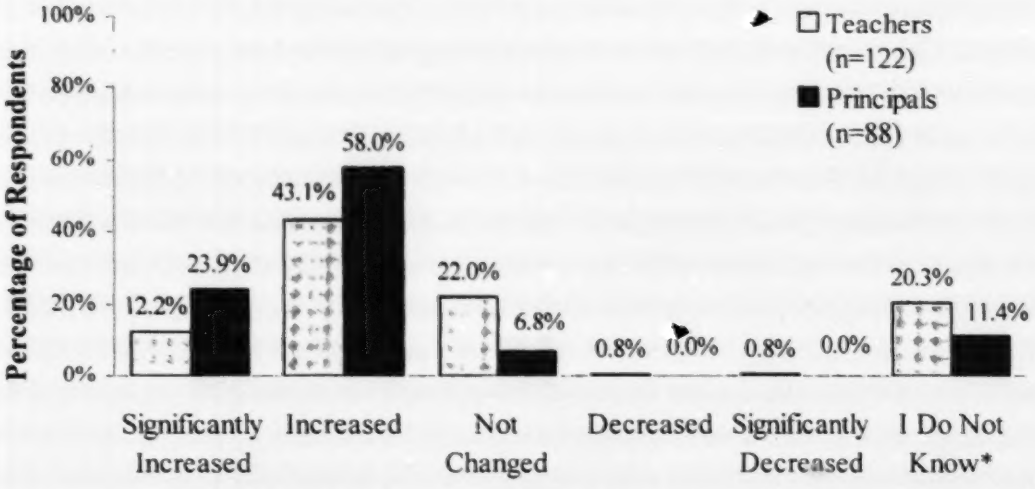
Figure 2: Teachers' and Principals' Responses to the Survey Item *"Compared to last year, the number of discussions about teaching and learning—as a result of the focus on Clear Expectations—at my campus has...:"*



* *Complete response option on the survey read: "I do not know—I was not at this campus during the previous academic year."*

Results from a similar question posed to teachers and principals about discussions of teaching and learning in the context of the TEKS differed slightly, as shown in Figure 3 on the next page. Although a majority of respondents from both groups indicated that discussions about teaching and learning in the context of the TEKS had increased, more principals than teachers reported this increase. More teachers (i.e., 22%, n=27) reported that the number of discussions had "not changed," compared with 7% of the principals. Finally, 20% of the teachers (n=25) and 11% of the principals (n=10) who responded to this question indicated that they did not know, because they were not at the campus during the previous academic year.

Figure 3: Teachers' and Principals' Responses to the Survey Item *"Compared to last year, the number of opportunities to discuss teaching and student learning—in the context of the TEKS—at my campus has...:"*



**Complete response option on the survey read: "I do not know—I was not at this campus during the previous academic year."*

Finally, a majority of 89 principals reported that they strongly agreed (30%; n=27) or agreed (43%; n=38) that LearningWalks on their campuses fostered positive conversations about the practice of teaching. Two principals indicated that they "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with this statement.

TEACHER PARTICIPATION

Teachers reported moderate levels of involvement in the initiative on the Teacher Survey. As seen in Table 2 on the following page, teachers reported that they discussed Clear Expectations with a variety of people, most frequently with other teachers at their campus. One hundred percent of teachers reported discussing Clear Expectations with someone; 96% of teachers reported discussing Clear Expectations with people from more than one category.

Table 2: Teachers' Responses to the Survey Item *"With which of the following people have you discussed the Principle of Clear Expectations?"*

Person with Whom Teachers Discussed Clear Expectations	Percentage of Teachers Selecting Person
Teachers on campus	95%
Principal	84%
Assistant Principal	73%
Teachers on another campus	38%
Curriculum Specialist from CAC	32%
Parents	32%
Instructional Specialist	23%
All of the Above	3%

n=122

In addition, teachers reported that a variety of POL-related topics were addressed at staff meetings and other activities on their campuses, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Teachers' Responses to the Survey Item *"Which of the following topics have been addressed at the various staff meetings and activities on your campus during 2000-2001 (e.g., faculty, grade level, team group, or department meetings)?"*

Topic Addressed at Staff Meeting and Activities on Campus	Percentage of Teachers Selecting Topic
All of the Above	63%
Clear Expectations	34%
TEKS	34%
Models of student work	32%
Rubrics	32%
Development of Criteria Charts	31%
Curriculum and Instruction	15%
Published articles about teaching and/or learning	6%

n=122

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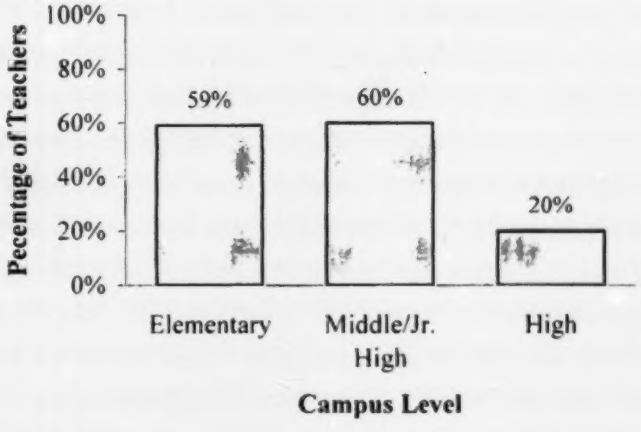
Over half of all teachers reported having participated in a LearningWalk during the year. As shown in Figure 4 below, however, more elementary and middle/junior high school teachers reported being on LearningWalk teams than did high school teachers. Additionally, teachers' years of experience appeared to be related to participation in LearningWalk teams, as 70% of teachers with 1-3 years of experience, compared to 47% of teachers with 4 or more years of experience, reported being on a team. Of teachers who reported being on LearningWalk teams, 41% reported participating in one LearningWalk, 53% reported participating in 2-4, and 6% reported participating in 5 or more LearningWalks during 2000-01. A majority of teachers (81%) reported that they participated in LearningWalks with other faculty from their campus; 35% participated with their principal, 26% alone, and 15% with faculty from another campus.

Figure 4: Teachers' Responses to the Survey Item, *"Have you been on a LearningWalk team this year?"*



LEARNINGWALKS

By Spring of 2001, LearningWalks had been conducted by all five Area Superintendents and at all of the district's campuses. At some campuses, LearningWalks had been conducted more than once. As one avenue for learning about the Principles of Learning, staff at some campuses organized their own intra-campus LearningWalks with teachers visiting other classrooms in their schools. In addition, LearningWalks were sometimes integrated as part of an area meeting led by the area superintendent. This section will focus on LearningWalks conducted by the area superintendents.

Observations of LearningWalks in 2000-2001 are based on field notes taken by an evaluation associate from the Office of Program Evaluation at nine campuses representing all five areas—four elementary, two middle, and three high schools.

Structure of LearningWalks

LearningWalks had a basic structure followed by all area superintendents. The area superintendent first met with the principal and other staff, such as the assistant principal and/or instructional specialist, to discuss the on-going work on the Principles of Learning and to plan the classrooms to be visited. In the classrooms, group members took notes on classroom displays for evidence of Clear Expectations and talked quietly with students about their work. After visiting classrooms, the group reconvened in the conference room for a debriefing. Here, members of the LearningWalk group discussed their observations and talked about ways to improve their work on Clear Expectations. Discussions about how to improve the work were especially important because they became part of the LearningWalk letter, designed to give campus staff an opportunity to think more deeply about teaching and learning. Ideas for improving the work were always articulated in the form of questions for thought in the LearningWalk letter. While LearningWalks were not evaluative, observations from LearningWalks served as an indicator of the implementation of the Principles.

Classroom and Hallway Displays

Evidence of Clear Expectations being implemented in schools came largely from two sources: hall and classroom displays and conversations with students. LearningWalk groups examined classroom and hallway displays that included student work, criteria charts, or rubrics. Although Clear Expectations encompasses broader ideals that includes students knowing what they are learning, what constitutes good work, and how to measure their work against a model, during this first year of the implementation, LearningWalk participants often focused their discussions on the more evident, and tangible features of Clear Expectations, such as criteria charts, rubrics, and models of student work. According to the Principles of Learning, models of student work are important, because they offer one avenue for making expectations clear to students. For parents and the community, displays of student work make clear the standards that students are working toward. Also, displays of student work offer a way to celebrate

students' accomplishments in working toward the standard. Student work displays in classrooms and hallways were common throughout the schools visited, although they were more heavily concentrated in elementary campuses. Many, however, did not have descriptions of the assignment's objectives. Displays of student work that followed the indicators for Clear Expectations included a description of the lesson associated with the work *and* the relevant TEKS standard. Figure 5 shows a piece of student work that was displayed in the hallway of an elementary school. First grade students wrote word problems using addition or subtraction and then used mathematical notation to represent the problem. They also drew pictures representing their problem on a brown paper bag. Inside each paper bag was an index card on which the student had written the answer to the problem.

Figure 5: Elementary Student Work in Mathematics on a Hallway Display

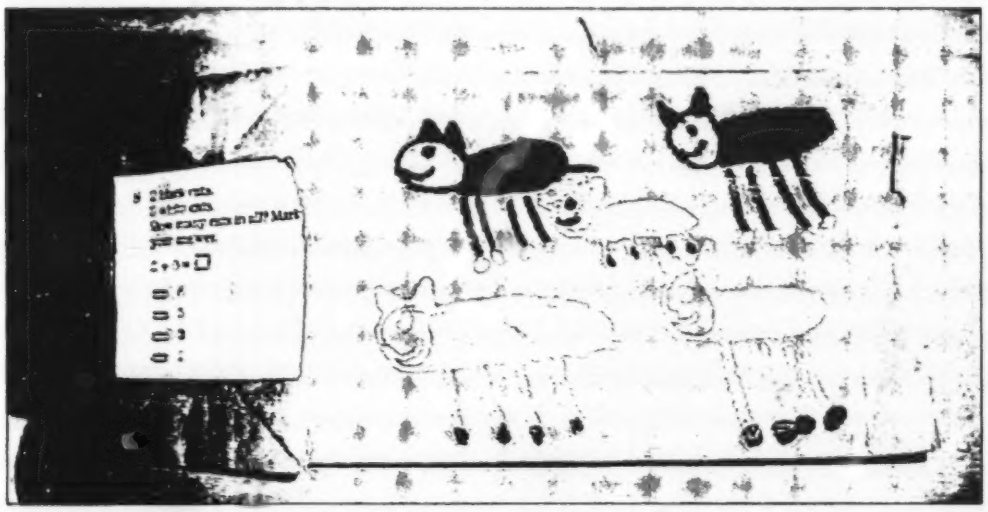


Figure 6 shows the accompanying TEKS objective posted by the display that included the problem shown in Figure 5.

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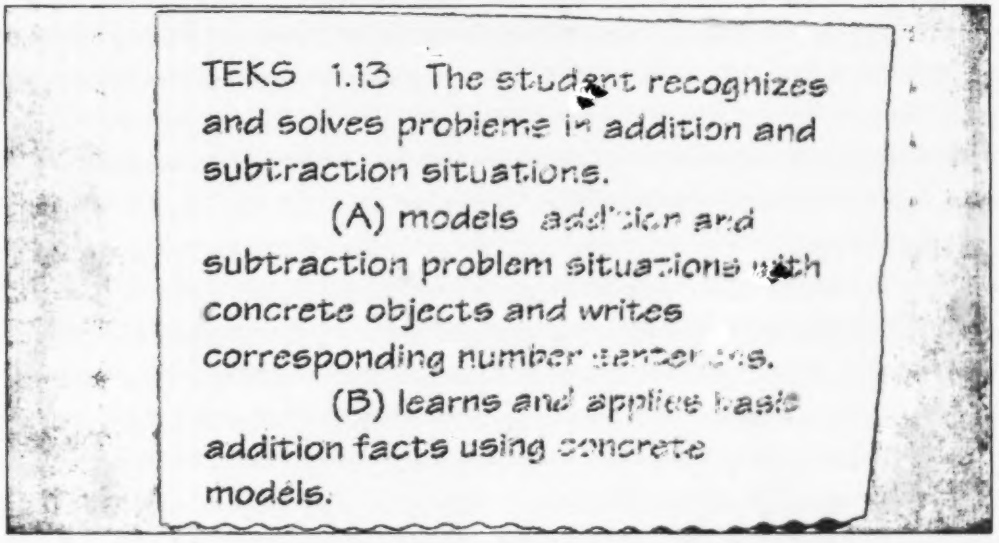
Figure 6: TEKS Objectives that Accompanied a Student Work Display on Mathematics


TEKS 1.13 The student recognizes and solves problems in addition and subtraction situations.
(A) models addition and subtraction problem situations with concrete objects and writes corresponding number sentences.
(B) learns and applies basic addition facts using concrete models.

Criteria charts and rubrics also communicate expectations about student work. The former specify the components that must be present in a student's work on a particular unit or assignment, while rubrics convey how well the student has met those expectations. Rubrics also help students understand what they need to do in order to reach high standards. Figure 7 shows a rubric for an assignment designed to help kindergarten students understand sequenced patterns and how to create them with color. The TEKS, which are not shown here, were included on the display.

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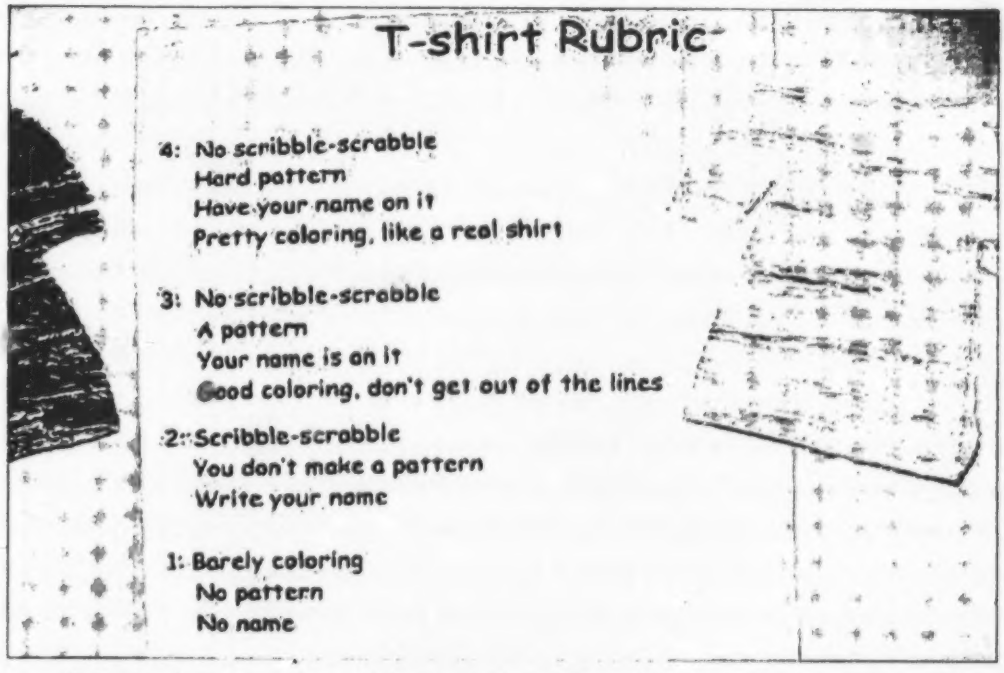
Figure 7: Kindergarten-Level Rubric about a Pattern Assignment



Criteria charts were posted in many classrooms that were visited. The quality and content varied greatly, however. Many charts on display were not curriculum-based; rather, the most common type listed expectations for classroom behavior. One dimension of quality in criteria charts that was considered by some area superintendents was the process used to design it. Under the Principle of Clear Expectations, students should be involved in creating criteria charts. When students contribute to a discussion about what is important to include on a writing assignment, for example, students are more likely to understand the expectations, and they can engage in discussion of the assignment and receive clarification as needed. From conversations with individual students, it appeared that most criteria charts posted in classrooms were created by the teacher alone. In those instances where criteria charts *were* developed with the class, students would invariably be eager to point out their contributions to the displayed chart. Another dimension of quality in criteria charts is their evolution. Criteria charts are not meant to contain a static list of expectations for work. Instead, they are tools meant to "develop" over time as students master certain expectations and discover new ones that might be helpful toward improvement of their work. At this point in the implementation, it was unclear whether criteria charts were generally updated to reflect students' growing understanding.

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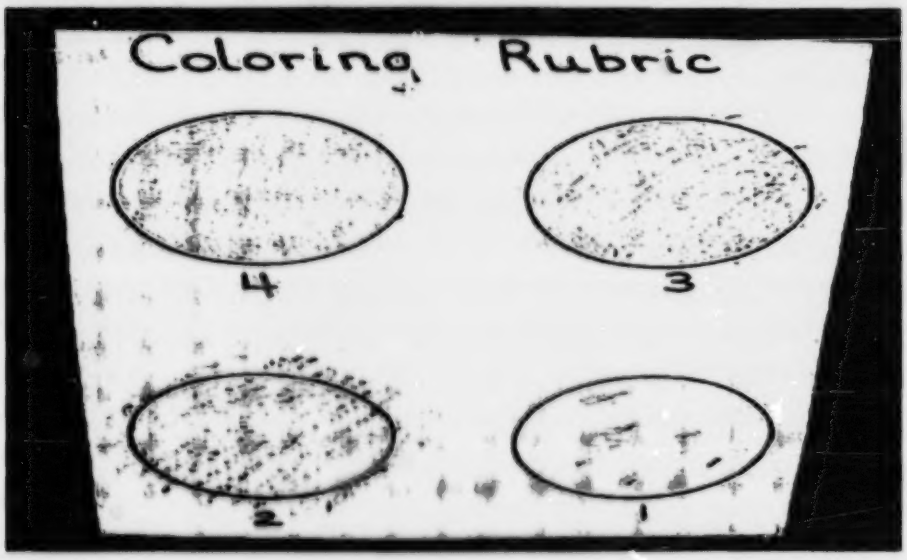
The number of criteria charts in any particular class varied as well. In some classrooms, teachers made heavy use of criteria charts, while in others, a teacher had just one criteria chart or none. A notable observation is that teachers who included *several* criteria charts in their classroom displays were overwhelmingly at elementary schools. At the secondary level, it was less common to see more than one criteria chart in a classroom. A science teacher might have just one criteria chart regarding problem solving; this was the case in two high school physics classrooms that were visited.

It is unclear what factors contributed to the variability in the number, content, or quality of criteria charts in any one teacher's classroom. Displays, or lack thereof, might reflect the teachers' level of understanding of the purpose of Clear Expectations and its fundamental rationale. Because principals themselves were learning about the Principles of Learning during the year, it is not clear to what extent teachers were prepared to implement the Principles at the classroom level, especially since most of their professional development on the Principles occurred on their own campuses.

Rubrics were much less common than criteria charts in the classrooms visited in the middle of 2000-2001, and their quality also varied. Like criteria charts, rubrics serve to clarify expectations for students, but they also communicate the dimensions of an assignment's evaluation, as well as the expectations for reaching a standard in that work. Figure 8 shows a rubric from a kindergarten class used to illustrate good coloring skills.

Figure 8: Kindergarten Rubric for Coloring, Displayed in a Classroom



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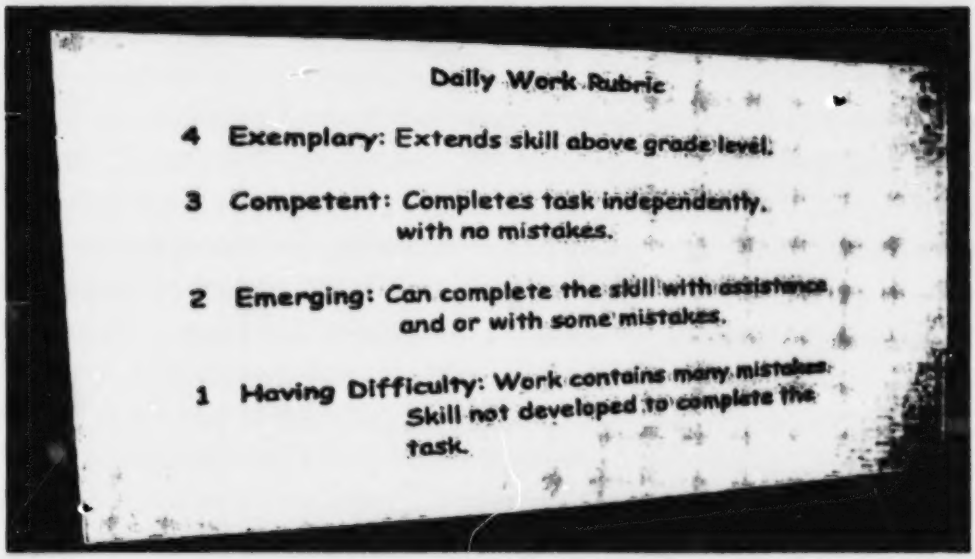
Other rubrics suggested that staff did not recognize their purpose as articulated under Clear Expectations. Some included categories labeled from "1" to "4" that did not specify expectations for a particular assignment or skill. Figure 9 illustrates one example.

Figure 9: A General Rubric, Displayed in a Kindergarten Classroom


Daily Work Rubric
4 Exemplary: Extends skill above grade level.
3 Competent: Completes task independently, with no mistakes.
2 Emerging: Can complete the skill with assistance and or with some mistakes.
1 Having Difficulty: Work contains many mistakes. Skill not developed to complete the task.

These kinds of rubrics communicate an evaluation of the student's work similar to the way grades do. However, they do not indicate what work that meets the standard looks like, or what the student needs to do to achieve it.

Additional evidence that teachers were beginning to implement the Principles of Learning included displays showing questions related to Accountable Talk. Although the principle of Accountable Talk was not a central focus of professional development for principals in 2000-2001, some had discussed it with their faculty members. In one elementary school's classrooms, displays of statements in line with Accountable Talk were posted in English and Spanish. Figure 10 shows a list of statements from a second grade bilingual classroom as one example.

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Figure 10: Accountable Talk Statements, Displayed in a Second Grade Classroom

Observaciones:	Observations:
Yo noté que...	I noticed that...
Yo aprendí que...	I learned that...
A mi me sorprendió que...	I was surprised that...
Yo figuré que...	I thought that...
Predicir:	For Predictions
Yo pienso que...	I think that...
Yo me pregunto si...	I ask whether...

Visitors to a classroom at this school observed a second grade teacher leading her students in a discussion about books they had just read. Students not only gave their opinions about the books; the teacher guided them in *justifying* why they would or would not recommend the book to a friend.

LearningWalk Conversations with Students

Other evidence of the implementation of Clear Expectations emerged from conversations with students and teachers. Teachers were often too busy to converse with a LearningWalk group while a visit was being conducted. With students, however, it was more common for LearningWalk group members to approach an individual student or small group of students working on an assignment to ask the following types of questions:

- What are you learning?
- Why do you need to learn this?
- Is your work good?
- How do you know your work is good?

These questions were a few of the ones suggested by the Institute for Learning to be asked during LearningWalks. According to the Principles of Learning, when students have a clear sense of the purpose of their work and the goals for their learning, they are generally able to give some indication that they are aware of clear expectations during conversations.

Students were generally eager to share their work with visitors. It was not unusual for an elementary student writing a journal entry or story to spontaneously offer to read aloud his or her work for a visitor who inquired about the assignment. However, the degree to which students could articulate the expectations of their work varied. Students were well-aware of high expectations, but whether these were *clear* remained unknown. In response to questions such as, "How do you know your work is good?" most students replied that the *teacher* would indicate whether the work was good. Among elementary students, the reply often included a reference to parents, for example, "My mom says I'm a good writer," or "My dad checks my homework and tells me." Occasionally, students would refer to a "good work chart" for guiding their work or skills on a task like reading unfamiliar words. A couple of middle school students explained to a visitor how they used a checklist provided by their teacher to evaluate each other's compositions. One of the two boys told the visitors that he gets C's in the class, but knew why—he was missing items in his portfolio. Despite his grades, he commented that he liked the teacher because she was clear in explaining the work her students were required to do. Similarly, in one high school photography class, a number of photos taken and developed by students were displayed on a board, and students had evaluated their own work against a list of criteria, as shown on an accompanying criteria chart entitled, "Acceptable Print Quality." The students' evaluations—with the teacher's comments—were posted next to the photos. A student called on by the area superintendent was able to describe how his work (on display) could be improved.

LearningWalk Letters

The purpose of LearningWalk letters, as described earlier, is to stimulate discussions about how to improve teaching and learning among staff at a campus, in addition to promoting reflection about progress in implementing the Principles of Learning. After a LearningWalk, the principal wrote a letter addressed to the staff, with feedback from the Area Superintendent. During the Principals' Seminar in late January, area superintendents discussed a structure for LearningWalk letters in AISD. Specifically, LearningWalk letters would be one page in length and would include the following:

- a brief reminder of the purpose of LearningWalks,
- observations related to the features of Clear Expectations,

- questions for staff to reflect on to help move the work forward,
- an indication of what will be expected in the next LearningWalk, and
- an affirmation.

Thirty-four LearningWalk letters from two areas—all written before the winter break of 2000-2001—were reviewed and found to follow this structure. The letters indicated that the implementation of Clear Expectations is well underway as evidenced by classroom and hallway displays and conversations with students, although the quality of implementation varied. The questions posed for thought, meant to move the work forward, could offer indications of where a campus may be in its implementation. For example, questions such as, *"What is a criteria chart, and how can it be used by students to evaluate their learning?"* or *"When and how often are criteria for quality work discussed?"* suggest that a school's staff may be at the beginning stages of examining and implementing Clear Expectations. Some of the letters also included questions asking staff to think about how they would organize opportunities to discuss teaching and learning among themselves. Other letters gave evidence that staff at a few campuses were further along in the implementation. The following question was included on a LearningWalk letter that documented observations students' use of models, criteria charts, and rubrics to guide their work had been described earlier in the letter. The question suggests that the area superintendent had probably discussed with staff how they would advance their work.

> *Where are we in implementing the Principles of Learning? What is the next level for us? What does it look like? How will we get there? What is the hard evidence that will indicate we are there?*

In an open-ended question about successes in the implementation of the Principles of Learning, approximately 10% of the principals (n=8) named LearningWalks in particular and gave positive feedback: "The LearningWalks are a powerful tool. It has helped my campus develop (implement) a continuity of expectations." Of the eight principals who cited LearningWalks as a beneficial practice, four added that they would like additional funds for substitutes so that teachers could do LearningWalks as part of their professional development.

Conclusions about the Implementation of the Principles of Learning

Evidence from a sample Campus Improvement Plans, surveys of principals and teachers, and LearningWalk observations suggest that learning about the Principles is well underway. Most CIPs in the sample indicated that the implementation of the Principles of Learning would be part of the campuses' plans for staff development or improvements in student achievement in a particular content area. Survey responses suggested that most teachers had learned about the Principles from training on their campuses, and that many had talked about the initiative with other teachers, the principal, or other campus support staff. All principals and most teachers reported having begun implementing Clear Expectations in their campuses and classrooms, respectively, by October 2000, and by Spring 2001, area superintendents had done LearningWalks on all campuses in their areas.

The implementation of practices associated with Clear Expectations at the campus level, however, was more variable, as indicated by the use and quality of tools such as criteria charts, rubrics, and other displays that help communicate the standards that students are working toward in their learning. During LearningWalks, some students could tell visitors what they were learning and why it was important, but most seemed to evaluate their work in terms of grades or feedback from their teachers or parents. As district staff become more familiar with the Principles of Learning through training and practice, the implementation of associated practices throughout the district will likely improve and expand.

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING INITIATIVE

Area superintendents, principals, and teachers were surveyed to gather information on the perceived effects of the implementation of the Principles of Learning during the initiative's first year. Survey questions focused on three main areas: professional development, support for the initiative, and instruction and student achievement. In addition to multiple-choice items, surveys included open-ended questions about professional development and the successes and challenges related to the implementation of Clear Expectations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Starting in 2000-2001, area superintendents, principals, central office curriculum specialists, campus-based instructional specialists, and most teachers attended training in the implementation of the Principles of Learning in content areas, especially in language arts. Almost every (99%) principal agreed that the professional development experiences in which they participated prepared them to implement Clear Expectations at their campuses. In addition, 99% of principals reported that presentations at the Principals' Seminars yielded ideas that they were able to take back to the faculty.

Similarly, a majority of teachers (85%) reported that staff meeting activities during 2000-01 advanced their understanding of teaching and learning; 91% agreed that campus-based professional development experiences prepared them to incorporate Clear Expectations in their classrooms. Regarding staff development sessions attended through the Professional Development Academy, 29% of teachers reported that the sessions always included discussions about Clear Expectations; 77% said that sessions included discussions about Clear Expectations at least some of the time. Fifty-seven percent of teachers reported that Professional Development Academy Sessions always included discussion of the TEKS; 93% reported that sessions included discussions of the TEKS at least some of the time.

Principals and teachers were also asked how professional development on the Principles of Learning could be improved for their *respective* staff groups. Of the 82 principals who responded to the question, 7.3% (n=6) responded that professional development on the Principles of Learning was fine, e.g., "The current structure works

fine." For principals, the most frequent suggestion (by 23%, or n=19) listed was to include other campus staff members, such as assistant principals, but most especially, teachers so that there would be more individuals trained and prepared to help campus staff: "Include teachers from the campus in the training so a group of us can take the information back to the staff," and "It [including teachers] lessens the we-them effect." With the exception of training provided by the PDA, much of the professional development for teachers occurred at campuses, thereby limiting the kinds of cross-campus exchanges that were available to principals in the Principals' Seminars.

The next most frequent suggestion, given by 21% (n=17) of principals was to have more time for sharing ideas, for example, "More time to dialogue about what we are doing on individual campuses," and "Give us more time to reflect and process." Almost 20% (n=16) suggested that more examples and/or different videos be used during professional development, especially ones that come from AISD: "We see the same videos over and over again....It would be extremely helpful to see Austin ISD videos re. Clear Expectations," "Provide additional examples of criteria charts, rubrics, and accountable talk," and "Need more models (video, etc.) of how teachers discuss criteria and expectations with students in relation to Texas standards."

Additionally, ten principals (12%) suggested that the Principles of Learning be more clearly integrated with other on-going initiatives in the district: "Coordinate the various initiatives the District has undertaken (POL, Quality Council, and others and develop a common language and focus)," and "Principals need to be given the freedom to use IFL as one of the tools that support the CIP, TEKS, PDAS, and Best Practice. IFL is useful only as it supports what is relevant to the specific needs of the individual learner." Finally, 11% (n=9) offered suggestions about timing of the professional development sessions and forwarding of materials related to sessions led by the principals: "better timing of staff development—not a week before major deadlines like BTO [local campus budget]," "Provide campus training materials at least three weeks before training dates," and "We are given materials very last minute...or told we need to use part or all of a day for IFL late in the game."

Teachers had a few of the same concerns about professional development, such as having more time to work with and learn from their peers. The most frequent suggestions by teachers (18% or n=20) were to be able to work with other teachers in groups, such as

those in the same department, or with those teaching a grade level above or below: "Allow us to work in groups within our department to make the information more relevant," and "Watching the TV—of a person talking—is boring and it is very easy to miss a lot. I would prefer acting out situations/role playing." Another 14% of teachers (n=15) suggested being able to observe teachers or listen to presentations by teachers: "I could use more opportunities to observe teachers or schools who are 'getting it right,'" and "Rather than use administrators, use teachers who have actually used them. Philosophy only goes so far; we need pedagogy. Also, there might be less resistance to the change." As with some principals, 9% (n=10) of teachers wrote that more time was needed to learn about the Principles of Learning and/or implement them. Some teachers, like principals, also reported that better examples or models needed to be incorporated in their training: "Discuss in more depth and give clear examples," and "There must be some models of primary rubrics and criteria charts available instead of each single teacher trying to do this on their own."

Although 14% of teachers (n=15) simply wrote positive comments and no additional suggestions about professional development related to the Principles of Learning, a few (7% or n=8) reported that they wanted less training and/or that the initiative involved too much additional work: "Less in-service required to sit through....make the in-service optional." Additional perspectives by teachers on the Principles of Learning initiative are included in the subsection below, entitled "Support for Implementing the Initiative."

Another avenue for professional development related to the initiative in AISD was the pilot test of the IFL's NetLearn project. This part of the Principles of Learning initiative involved technology-based professional development. During the school year, resident fellows distributed beta version copies of a multimedia CD-ROM to be used for professional development in AISD. The CD includes video clips of Lauren Resnick, director of the Institute for Learning, discussing the philosophy behind the Principles of Learning, as well as videos illustrating their implementation. For example, educators using the CD can view classrooms in which the teacher is using Accountable Talk in her classroom discussions with students. Video clips of classrooms on this version of the CD-ROM came from schools in New York city's Community District #2, where the Institute for Learning had assisted staff in its reform efforts. Given that IFL staff were

interested in knowing what staff felt about the CD, two questions were included on the principals' survey.

On the principals' survey, 85 principals responded to questions about the IFL's CD-ROM. Of those, 76% (n=65) principals reported that they had used the CD to learn about the Principles of Learning. Principals were also asked to indicate how useful they found the CD-ROM provided by the IFL. Seventy-five percent of principals found the CD somewhat or very useful.

SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING THE INITIATIVE

Two-way accountability is an important element of the Principles of Learning initiative. While district staff are working to implement the initiative, it is vital that they have the support they need from both the IFL and the district to accomplish the work involved. Area superintendents and principals were asked to assess the quality of support they received to carry out their work under the Principles of Learning. Teachers' responses to an open-ended question about successes and challenges in implementing Clear Expectations are also addressed here.

Area superintendents were asked, *"What do you need from: a) the district, and b) the Institute for Learning to continue improving the implementation of the Principle of Clear Expectations at the campuses in your area?"* One area superintendent recommended including teachers in IFL training with campus principals—a suggestion often made by principals and some teachers, as discussed in the previous section. Another simply responded that there should be a continued focus on Clear Expectations and a focus on Academic Rigor. Finally, another wanted schools to have more opportunities for teachers to plan and discuss the Principles of Learning on professional development days. The other suggestion was that IFL resident fellows provide technical assistance "more aligned to our needs," in terms of materials for principals' seminars, which often required modifications in preparation for principals' seminars.

Area superintendents were also asked to list any difficulties they saw at campuses as school staff worked to implement the Principle of Clear Expectations. Two of the three who completed the survey mentioned issues related to teachers' ownership of the initiative in relation to how the Principles of Learning were implemented, for example: "Having to convince teachers that although the initiative was "top-down" or initiated by central headquarters, it was still a valuable initiative." Another difficulty, also mentioned

by two superintendents, was having enough time to schedule professional development at the campus level "due to the limited staff development days." Despite these difficulties, none of the three area superintendents reported that there were any negative effects on campuses as a result of the implementation of Clear Expectations.

Finally, area superintendents were also asked the following: *"How would you characterize the quality of support given by the Institute for Learning resident fellows to you as you worked on implementing the Principle of Clear Expectations at your campuses this year?"* While one responded simply, "Great support," two area superintendents mentioned the role of their own efforts in moving the initiative forward: "We did just as much as they did, which is OK, but it should be acknowledged by the Institute." and, "This year, I felt the area superintendents carried most of the initiative." At the same time, one responded having enjoyed working with the IFL fellows and expressed confidence that, "As they get to know AISD, their services will better meet our needs," and mentioned AISD's large, urban K-12 setting.

Ninety principals responded to a survey question about how they would rate the quality of support offered by their area superintendent for the implementation of Clear Expectations. A majority of principals (57%, or n=51) rated their area superintendents' support as *excellent*. Another 28% (n=25) of principals rated their area superintendents' support as *good*. Fourteen percent of the principals rated the support as *somewhat good*, and just one principal rated support by the area superintendent as *somewhat weak*. None of the principals rated their area superintendents' support as *weak* or *poor*.

Principals were also asked to rate the quality of support offered by the district for implementation of Clear Expectations. Table 4 shows how principals responded to this survey item. Although the ratings were slightly less positive in comparison with ratings of their area superintendents' support, a majority of principals rated the quality of support from the district as *excellent* or *good* (65%, or n=58).

Table 4: Principals' Responses to the Question: "*In your opinion, how would you rate the quality of support offered by the district for implementation of Clear Expectations at your school this year?*"

Rating	Response Frequency % (n)
Excellent	16% *(14)*
Good	49% *(44)*
Somewhat Good	23% *(21)*
Somewhat Weak	9% *(8)*
Weak	3% *(3)*
Poor	0% *(0)*

The most common difficulty listed by principals (35, or 43% of the respondents) in an open-ended question about challenges related to the initiative was having enough time, either for professional development or activities such as LearningWalks: "finding the time for staff development and dialogue," "time for teacher reflection," and "finding time to visit classrooms for LearningWalks." Another challenge cited (22% of the respondents, or n=18) was related to issues of buy-in and/or teacher resistance: "buy-in, because of changes in instructional focus each year; perception [that] POL is to please central office vs. help students," "staff frustrations—one more thing to do attitude," and "…overcoming resistance to change from veteran teachers. The attitude of 'here we go again' is hard to deal with."

Although teachers were asked a more general question about successes and challenges in implementing Clear Expectations, their responses sometimes addressed the issue of support for the initiative. A small minority (6%, or n=6) of the 103 teachers who responded to this question indicated sentiments of resistance to practices associated with the Principle of Clear Expectations. One respondent included reservations about how practices associated with Clear Expectations could be reconciled with the yearly TAAS exam:

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> I am certain that the Principles of Learning is fine, but it is not the be-all and end-all that some would have us believe....I am perplexed by the ideas of reconciling the Principles of Learning with TAAS. I sense that I have been given two sets of marching orders. One says go to Laredo, and one says go to Dallas....I have always expressed clear expectations for students; I have used rubrics for years. I visit other classrooms and share ideas with my colleagues....

As illustrated in the quote above, teachers sometimes reported that clear expectations had always been part of their teaching. Observations by area superintendents that the initiative was instituted "top-down," along with other remarks related to teacher resistance by principals in their descriptions of challenges, appear to be corroborated by some of the data collected from teachers.

Finally, on the AISD Coordinated Survey, campus administrators and teachers were asked to indicate the three most positive features of discussing the Principle of Clear Expectations for their own campuses. Of the nine options from which they could choose (i.e., LearningWalks in the classroom; public displays of student work around the campus; improvement in the campus climate; display of criteria charts; relationships among teachers, instructional specialists, and principals; and increased alignment of goals for instructional practices with the campus improvement plan), campus administrators and teachers chose the same three most frequently, though in different orders, as shown in Table 4.

Table 5: Campus Administrators' and Teachers' Three Most-Selected Positive Features of Clear Expectations

	Campus Administrators	Teachers
Students' articulations regarding expectations of their own work.	1	2
Clarification of the connection between the TEKS and classroom practices for teaching staff.	2	3
Teachers' expectations about student work are clear.	3	1

(1=most frequently cited)

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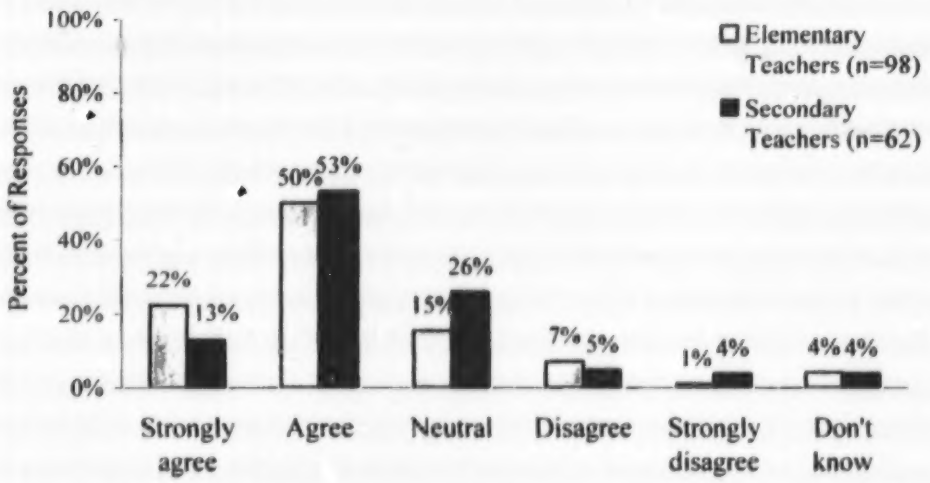
INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

As an indicator of the degree to which principals and teachers recognized how the Principle of Clear Expectations could be implemented in accordance with teaching that is aligned with the TEKS, teachers were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement: "*I understand how the Principle of Clear Expectations fits with the TEKS for the grade level I teach.*" Figure 11 shows teachers' responses disaggregated by elementary and secondary levels.

Figure 11: Teachers' Responses to a Survey Item about Understanding of the Alignment Between the Principles of Learning and TEKS



Principals were asked a similar question: "*The Principle of Clear Expectations is useful for teaching that is aligned with the TEKS.*" Of 89 principals who responded, 94% (n=84) "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement. None of the principals indicated that they disagreed with Clear Expectations being useful for teaching that is aligned with the TEKS.

To gather information on other effects of the initiative, area superintendents were asked, "How has the implementation of the Principles of Learning affected you and your duties as an area superintendent?" Responses from the three who responded indicated that the initiative led to more focus on instruction, but more importantly, reflected their perception that the initiative has brought a focus among district staff on learning standards for the first time. One also indicated that "my four other colleagues and I are

more in line with each other in our duties and training, thus enhancing cohesiveness district-wide."

Area superintendents were asked to list three main improvements they saw at campuses in their area as a result of the implementation of the Principles of Learning, specifically, the Principle of Clear Expectations. All three respondents to the survey indicated there was more focus on instruction as a result of the initiative. Another area superintendent went on to specify that there was a greater focus on the TEKS as the learning standards. Equity was listed as another improvement because, "more students have access to what's expected." Finally, one area superintendent reported that the area was "more cohesive due to the common focus on POL." One other related source of evidence for this focus on instruction emerged in late May 2001, when Lauren Resnick of the Institute for Learning and district administrators discussed the progress of the initiative at a Board Meeting. Administrators conducting the final interviews for new principal openings in the district remarked that interviewees currently with AISD were much better prepared to discuss issues of teaching and learning in their interviews, compared with candidates from previous years, and as compared with candidates from other districts (Rips, 2001).

Eighty-two principals (out of 89 who returned surveys) responded to the open-ended question: *"What are the successes and/or challenges you have seen or experienced while incorporating Clear Expectations at your campus? (If not applicable, please indicate and explain.)"* Forty-five percent of principals (37 respondents) reported various successes of the initiative. Often, the comments referred to an improved focus on teaching and learning and/or dialogue among teachers at the campus, sometimes with a reported understanding of the connection between Clear Expectations and improved learning by students, for example, "teachers making connection[s] between Clear Expectations and improved quality of student work."

Of the 123 teachers who responded to the survey, 103 included a response to the open-ended question: *"What are the successes and/or challenges you have seen or experienced while incorporating Clear Expectations in your classroom? If not applicable, please indicate and/or explain."* Thirty-seven percent of teachers (n=38) who responded to the question listed successes in their classrooms as a result of implementing Clear Expectations, for example:

> The students expect to know about their tasks. When I inadvertently forgot to do a chart for a lesson with them, they asked me to do it. It makes teaching easier because students understand what they need to do. They are involved in the process, which is the heart of learning and implementing the TEKS.

In many cases, these successes were rooted in perceived improvements in student learning or work quality, for example, "The quality of work my students do has gone through the roof!" and "Students are able to better verbalize what they are learning, why it is important, and how they know if they have done a good job."

Despite the successes, teachers also mentioned the following challenges in implementing Clear Expectations. Seven percent of the teachers (n=7) reported problems with the time involved, for example, "It takes away a lot of instructional time to always talk about what does quality work look like, etc." Eighteen percent of the teachers (n=19) also reported difficulties implementing features of Clear Expectations, many times citing limitations of their students, for example, "My students are in Early Childhood and have no language thus far. It has been very difficult to implement a collaborative approach to writing expectations and is frustrating at times," and "It's a bit abstract for very young children. It's a lot for 7-8-year-olds to try to think about expectations, the rubric, and the actual work." Other times, teachers cited Clear Expectations as resulting in dependent behaviors on the part of students, or as having no effects on students' independent learning: "Some students became too dependent on described requirements. They need to do some things on their own without me giving step by step details," or "The challenge is to try to get the children to use the criterion [*sic*] charts rather than depend on the teachers. My children use the charts but still want me to tell them what to do." Finally, some of these teachers added that there was no effect on student performance in class, for instance, "The students don't get it, don't care, and it doesn't really help them LEARN any better," and:

> While students have helped generate clear expectations, they do not follow what is 'expected' of them. Students do not look to criteria charts the way I would have hoped. They were student-generated, but the kids just didn't seem to care about the ideas after the charts were generated....

To obtain baseline information on the effects of the Principles of Learning on student achievement, teachers were surveyed about their perceptions about the initiative's effects. Teachers were asked to respond to the statement, *"The implementation of Clear Expectations has been useful for improving student understanding about the subject(s) I teach."* Forty-six percent (n=56) responded that they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement; 35% "somewhat agreed." Similarly, 50% of teachers agreed that *"The implementation of Clear Expectations in my classroom—for example, creating criteria charts, displaying models of student work, and/or discussing expectations about work—have led to improvements in the quality of work my students do."*

Conclusions Regarding Staff Perceptions of Implementation and Effects of the Principles of Learning Initiative

The data on staff perceptions of the implementation the Principles of Learning on professional development, support for the initiative, instruction, and student achievement suggest that the initiative has, in general, led to increased communication about teaching and learning, according to most principals and teachers. At the same time, responses to survey questions about challenges and ways to improve professional development offer issues for program leaders to consider as the district moves forward with the Principles of Learning initiative.

One of the most significant aspects of professional development under the Principles of Learning at the campus level was the LearningWalks. Because LearningWalks were implemented as an on-going practice, they likely contributed to the focus on instruction and standards across educators at all levels. LearningWalks enabled area superintendents and principals to talk in a structured way about teaching and learning that also included feedback to teachers. At the same time, however, teachers were not usually included on LearningWalks led by area superintendents, so it is unclear how LearningWalks impacted the professional development of teachers being observed (as opposed to participating) in LearningWalks. The quality of the implementation of Clear Expectations appeared to vary across classrooms; however, principals tended to report a more positive effect on relationships between teachers and administrators as a result of the implementation of Clear Expectations, compared with teachers, whose survey results indicated a more cautious assessment. Also, some of the teachers' survey results suggest that, at least for this first year, there was a great deal of variability in the

perceived effects of Clear Expectations on students' quality of work and understanding in their classes. Some teachers suggested that professional development could be improved by having other teachers demonstrate their successful practices, and others indicated that a more global perspective on how the initiative relates to other ongoing programs while acknowledging teachers' previous training might facilitate the implementation process.

The Principles of Learning initiative appears to have led to more focus on the part of administrators on instructional practice—recall that over 80% of administrators had organized a professional development session in which participants were engaged in activities directly tied to implementation of Clear Expectations in the classroom. Reports from staff also indicated that instructional practice, teaching and learning, and the TEKS were primary topics of discussion in horizontal and area meetings, rather than operations matters. Evidence of the increased focus on instructional and curriculum-related topics were also reflected in the assessments of area superintendents about their roles as administrators.

Responses to survey questions about the Principles of Learning initiative show that district educators, including area superintendents, principals, and teachers, recognized that the initiative brought more focus on instruction practice. Some teachers also cited improved quality of work from students, as a result of Clear Expectations. In addition, principals were generally satisfied with the support received from area superintendents and the district. However, several challenges in implementing the initiative were cited, and all three groups made the following two suggestions: first, to include teachers in the training that principals attend regarding the Principles of Learning[1], and second, to include more dialogue among participants in professional development sessions about the efforts to implement Clear Expectations. Both of these suggestions would likely clarify issues raised by teachers about how the Principles of Learning fits with other on-going programs in the district, as well as accountability, and also help staff learn from each other as they share ideas about concrete practices that boost learning and achievement by students. Suggestions for more dialogue also appear to be related to requests for more AISD videos and examples of implementing Clear

[1] As of 2001-2002, principals have been asked by program administrators to have a teacher from their campus accompany them to planning meetings and principals' seminars.

Expectations.[2] Finally, a relatively small segment of teachers indicated that implementing practices associated with Clear Expectations involved excessive work, and one area superintendent and several principals mentioned resistance on the part of teachers to the initiative.

[2] AISD has begun broadcasting television programs about Clear Expectations in AISD classrooms on its local access cable channel.

Recommendations for Improvement of the Principles of Learning Implementation

The district's efforts to inform and educate staff about the Principles of Learning, starting with Clear Expectations in 2000-2001, appears to be well underway, despite some evidence of inconsistent implementation across campuses. The greatest effect of the initiative appears to lie in the common focus on instructional practice it has engendered, along with a common language for discussing high expectations for *all* students, regardless of aptitude, that are aligned with the TEKS. The common language that is a part of the Principles of Learning gives educators concepts and concrete ways to think about teaching and learning, and, through LearningWalks, gave area superintendents opportunities to discuss instruction at individual campuses in detail with each campus' staff.

Several strands of evidence indicate that the work on the Principles of Learning was underway during 2000-2001. A randomly selected sample of campus improvement plans showed that most principals described plans to incorporate the implementation of the Principles of Learning on their campuses during the school year. Principals, instructional specialists, and teachers indicated that implementation had begun at most campuses between Summer 2000 and October of that year. Teachers had also discussed the Principle of Clear Expectations with many other staff members in the district, most often with other teachers. Finally, program administrators made efforts toward standardizing language about progress on the initiative when they developed a rubric for describing the implementation of the Principals of Learning at the campus level. These goals and other tools for marking the advancing work are useful because they communicate and map direction for all stakeholders. Despite this progress, more work will be necessary to ensure a more consistent implementation, and survey respondents made several suggestions about how professional development could be improved.

Perhaps the biggest limitation in the implementation of the Principles of Learning is time. Both principals and teachers cited the need to have time to discuss the ideas behind the Principles in detail, along with the practices tied to them. This will likely become even more important as the adoption of Accountable Talk and Academic Rigor occur, because these Principles call for an especially deep embedding of curriculum content in their implementation. Teachers, in particular, need additional avenues aside

from campus-wide professional development days for improving instructional practice, specifically in settings that allow them to discuss teaching.

With time devoted to professional development as *the* primary factor for enhancing the learning about the Principles and for more effective implementation, the following additional recommendations are offered for program administrators:

- Teachers should be included in professional development involving the campus principals, as begun in Fall 2001. Area superintendents, principals, and teachers alike offered this suggestion for improving professional development in the Principles of Learning. This initiative is district-wide, yet training in 2000-2001 tended to occur in cross-campus forums for specified groups only, such as principals, assistant principals, and instructional specialists. For teachers, though, professional development in 2000-2001 occurred almost solely at the campus level, with the exception of seminars through the Professional Development Academy. Given that principals were learning about the initiative themselves, the inclusion of teachers may have made the initiative more effective in disseminating the philosophy and the practice of the Principles of Learning, and in facilitating the growth and development of learning communities on campuses. As it was, the learning on any one campus was dependent on the leadership on that campus and the understanding of the initiative by the principal.
- Include more examples of implementation of the Principles of Learning from the classroom in professional development sessions for principals and teachers. Ideally, the examples would come from AISD classrooms. Teachers and principals often suggested that examples of the implementation of Clear Expectations in the classroom, in use with the TEKS, would improve professional development. A few teachers suggested that having an AISD teacher present training on the Principles of Learning would be helpful. Another way this might be accomplished is by continuing the development of teacher learning communities that use videos currently shown on the district's local access cable channel, in conjunction with the CD-ROM-based materials developed by the IFL.
- Professional development that involves teachers should include a more global district perspective and where possible, capitalize on teachers' expertise. Teachers who responded to the survey with negative remarks often reported a

perception of constantly changing initiatives in the district, some of which they felt stood in conflict with others. In addition, some teachers reported that their years of experience and previous training was not acknowledged when new programs were implemented. By devoting a short discussion during professional development sessions for addressing 1) the district's global perspective of the initiative and how it fits with other initiatives, and 2) acknowledging teachers' expertise for carrying out the initiative will go a long way toward helping staff develop a better understanding of the initiative and each individuals' role in carrying it out.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

During 2000-2001, a majority of professional development for area superintendents and principals on the implementation of the Principles of Learning has focused on Clear Expectations. Staff at some campuses began learning about the Principle of Accountable Talk as well. The Institute for Learning has established meanings for these terms by first describing *features* of each Principle, which help define the Principles. Second, *indicators* for most of the features under the Principles are given, and these describe observable evidence associated with that Principle. Features for Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk are given below.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Under the principle of Clear Expectations, students' learning goals (i.e., the standards) are clearly defined—to school administration, parents, the community, and especially, the students themselves (Resnick, 1999). Four "features" of Clear Expectations describe the principle:

- Standards that include models of student work are available to and discussed with students.
- Students judge their work with respect to the standards.
- Intermediate expectations leading to the formally measured standards are specified.
- Families and community are informed about the accomplishment standards that children are expected to achieve.

In turn, professional development about Clear Expectations focused on "indicators," which are essentially observable practices for ensuring that student expectations are clear to the primary stakeholders (i.e., students, family, and community). Each feature of Clear Expectations has a number of indicators associated with it, and these have been the focus of campus-level work on implementation of the Principles. Of the 16 indicators that are part of Clear Expectations, those most relevant to the work in AISD on this initiative include:

- Standards and rubrics are posted in the classroom and are discussed with students.

- Students in the class can describe the substance of what they are trying to learn.
- Students are involved in explicating the criteria for work that meets the accomplishment standard (e.g., charts and rubrics are stated in student terms).
- Students know clearly when they have and have not met the intermediate expectations and standards.
- For every grade level, a sequence of expected concepts and skills are specified that lead explicitly to the formally measured standards.

ACCOUNTABLE TALK

Discussions about Accountable Talk have also been initiated at some campuses, although the Principle was not been formally covered in professional development sessions for principals and instructional specialists. The Principle of Accountable Talk is related to expectations for high quality work, but centers more directly on thinking and reasoning, and acknowledges the importance of talking with others about ideas and work for advancing students' learning. . As Resnick (1999) describes it, Accountable Talk "puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion." To illustrate, students engaged in Accountable Talk use evidence in ways that are appropriate to the subject under study (e.g., proofs in math, textual details in literature, data in science). Students use talk with teachers and fellow students to build on their understanding. During class discussions, for example, students respond to each other and further develop what others have said—and in essence, for all class work, norms of good reasoning are followed.

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